WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. 1. A method of benchmarking product samples provided to a purchasing
2. entity by multiple independent suppliers, comprising:
3. collecting multiple sets of performance parameter values corresponding to
4. results of testing each of the product samples at test facilities of each of the suppliers;
5. and
6. generating an evaluation report based upon the multiple sets of performance
7. parameter values.

1. 2. The method of claim 1, wherein collecting multiple sets of performance
2. parameter values comprises testing the product samples at test facilities of each of
3. the suppliers.

1. 3. The method of claim 2, wherein testing of product samples is
2. controlled by the purchasing entity.

1. 4. The method of claim 3, wherein the purchasing entity prevents
2. unauthorized access to the product samples during testing.

1. 5. The method of claim 3, wherein the purchasing entity maintains
2. custody of the product samples during testing.

1. 6. The method of claim 2, further comprising removing identification
2. information from the product samples before testing.

1. 7. The method of claim 6, wherein removing identification information
2. comprises removing from each product any information from which the product
3. supplier is identifiable.

1. 8. The method of claim 2, wherein the product samples are tested at test
2. facilities of each of the suppliers under substantially similar test conditions.

1. 9. The method of claim 1, further comprising analyzing the multiple sets
2. of performance parameters.

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1 　　　10.　The method of claim 8, further comprising compiling a single

2 consistent set of performance parameter values from the multiple sets of performance

3 parameter values.

1 　　　11.　The method of claim 1, further comprising transmitting the evaluation

2 report to one or more of the suppliers.

1 　　　12.　The method of claim 11, further comprising collecting a fee from a

2 given supplier before transmitting the evaluation report to the given supplier.

1 　　　13.　The method of claim 11, further comprising customizing the evaluation

2 report so that a supplier receiving the evaluation report is able to benchmark

3 performance of its product sample against other product samples without identifying

4 other suppliers.

1 　　　14.　The method of claim 13, wherein the evaluation report is customized

2 by encoding identification information of all suppliers other than the receiving

3 supplier.

1 　　　15.　The method of claim 1, wherein generating the evaluation report

2 comprises compiling a data structure relating parameter values and supplier test

3 facilities for each product sample.

1 　　　16.　The method of claim 15, wherein generating the evaluation report

2 comprises producing a graph displaying one or more performance parameter values

3 for each of the product samples.

1 　　　17.　A computer program for benchmarking product samples provided to a

2 purchasing entity by multiple independent suppliers, the computer program residing

3 on a computer-readable medium and comprising computer-readable instructions for

4 causing a computer to:

5 　　　collect multiple sets of performance parameter values corresponding to results

6 of testing each of the product samples at test facilities of each of the suppliers; and

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7   generate an evaluation report based upon the multiple sets of performance

8   parameter values.

1   18.   The computer program of claim 17, further comprising computer-

2   readable instructions for analyzing the multiple sets of performance parameters.

1   19.   The computer program of claim 18, further comprising computer-

2   readable instructions for compiling a single consistent set of performance parameter

3   values from the multiple sets of performance parameter values.

1   20.   The computer program of claim 17, further comprising computer-

2   readable instructions for customizing the evaluation report so that a supplier

3   receiving the evaluation report is able to benchmark performance of its product

4   sample against other product samples without identifying other suppliers.